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ZOLA'S "TRUTH" AND MRS. WILFRID WARD'S "THE LIGHT
BEHIND."

TRUTH (*La Vérité*). By Emile Zola. Translated by Ernest A. Vizetelly.
1903. New York: John Lane, the Bodley Head.

This, the only authorized translation of Zola's last work, has been carefully and lovingly turned into English by his devoted disciple, E. A. Vizetelly. In a succinct but comprehensive preface Mr. Vizetelly admirably summarizes the volume, and with a frank acknowledgment of his own personal love for his "dear Master," throws the light of explanation on many points possibly obscure to the nonresident of France.

"Truth," the longest of Zola's writings, is characterized by Zola's usual methods of style—a singular minuteness, especially noticeable in descriptions of persons immediately after their first introduction into the story, a tendency apt to tire the reader when characters are so numerous and the pen-portraiture unfortunately in no case easy to visualize; an absolute frankness in expressing his facts exactly as they are; and a sledge hammer force in hurling his views upon his readers.

The volume speaks deep hatred of the Roman Catholic Church, and an intense determination to fight it to the death. The blows are particularly aimed at the Church schools, and it seems a pity that Zola could not have lived to see the great strides toward the secularization of the schools that France has taken in the past few months.

While the book is not a history of the Dreyfus case, it is true that the wretched suppression of truth in Dreyfus's trial, the sufferings of his imprisonment on Devil's Island, the dogged perseverance of his friends at home until his release was obtained, and the galling nature of that release form the basis of the history of Simon the Jew schoolmaster.

A striking fact is that while fighting with powerful courage an established religion and even anticipating its downfall and banishment from home and school, Zola nowhere mentions or suggests a pure religion as a substitute, and one is

conscious as he reads of an empty place and of the impetus Zola might have given a faith had he had one.

From an abominable murder and all its painful results, from intense sufferings under poverty and injustice, from divisions and separations between husbands and wives, from all the usual Zolaistic horrors, there is at the end of this book a lapse almost into idealism. Zola, as though unable to resist a draught of pure fresh air, gathers together his storm-weary characters and gives us peaceful pictures of happy homes and flowers and reunions of families and friends—the young, full of love and hope; the old, of love still but also satisfaction.

THE LIGHT BEHIND. By Mrs. Wilfrid Ward. John Lane, the Bodley Head. London and New York. MCMIII.

In "The Light Behind" Mrs. Wilfrid Ward has given us a group of very strongly marked characters in a setting of English public life. If not in all English books, certainly in those that come to us, we are sure of at least one good thing—a cultured use of our common language. Mrs. Ward adds to this a singular delicacy, almost elusiveness, of style that just at first tends to obscurity. But a realism that feels no necessity of laying bare in hideous impressionism the tragedies of life has its own strength, an uplifting one in this instance.

The scope of the story is limited to the few closing months in the life of a woman married at an early age to a much older and thoroughly degraded man of the world. She must always have been frail; at any rate she is touchingly spoken of now as "so physically weak and morally strong." To compensate for the emptiness of a childless, unloved wifehood she has turned to her husband's estates, and there in schools and libraries and hospitals she has done a great work. Her husband, Lord Cheriton, permits this unwillingly, the more so that his Mephistopheles, Colquhoun, is always near for motives of his own to degrade farther the debauchee; and he is even successful in staining in the eyes of others the womanhood of Lady Cheriton, marvelously delicate and pure, and pitifully appealing in its loneliness.